

Message Text

SECRET

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72

ACTION EA-14

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R 291135 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 681

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

COMUSSAG

CINCPAC

COMUSMACTHAI

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 2918

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : MCAP, PINS CB

SUBJ: CHANGES IN MILITARY COMMANDS

1. DURING THE PAST FEW DAYS A NUMBER OF CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE IN FIELD COMMANDS, AS HAS ALREADY BEEN REPORTED THROUGH DAO CHANNELS. THESE CHANGES, WHICH SEEM TO HAVE EMANATED FOR THE MOST PART FROM MARSHAL LON NOL HIMSELF, CONSTITUTE SOME DESERVED DEMOTIONS FOR CERTAIN OFFICERS, SOME UNDERSERVED PROMOTIONS FOR OTHERS, A FORAY INTO CHIEF OF STAFF SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ' S HOME CONSTITUENCY AND A MORE RATIONAL DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE CRUCIAL MEKONG- ROUTE 1 REGION. FANK LEADERSHIP AS A RESULT HAS PROBABLY BEEN STRENGTHENED IN THIS LATST MENTIONED AREA BUT WEAKENED IN THE ROUTE 4, MR-2 AREA. FOLLOWING IS OUR PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THESE CHANGES.

2. THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP TAKEN WAS THE CREATION OF A NEW MILITARY REGION 6 WHICH WILL CONSIST OF THE BAPHNUM, SVAY RIENG AND PREY VENG MILITARY SUBDIVISION, FORMERLY MR-1. THIS WOULD SEEM TO BE A SENSIBLE MOVE IN THAT THE IMPORTNT ROUTE 1- ROUTE 15- MEKONG AREA IS PHYSICALLY SEVERED FROM MR-1 HEADQUARTERS AT KOMPONG CHAM AND THIS

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HAS CAUSED IN THE PAST COMMAND DIFFICULTIES. THE MR-6 COMMANDER WILL BE COL. NOP PARAMOUN, WHO HAS A GOOD RECORD IN SVAY RIENG. HE WILL FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST ALSO TAKE COMMAND OF THE MEKONG SPECIAL ZONE. BG SREY YAR, WHO HAS FAILED TO PULL THE PARA BRIGADE INTO SHAPE, WILL GET MR-1, WHICH NOW CONSISTS OF LITTLE MORE THAN KOMPONG CHAM CITY.

3. MR-1 COMMANDER MOUL KHLING'S APPOINTMENT TO MR-2 WILL PROBABLY BE AT THE EXPENSE OF THE LATTER COMMAND. IT IS ALSO AT THE POLITICAL EXPENSE OF CHIEF OF STAFF SOTHENE FERNANDEZ, WHO KEPT A PIED- A- TERRE IN THIS HUSHOME TERRITORY WHEN BG MEY SICHAN WAS ACTING COMMANDER THERE. FERNANDEZ TOLD CHMEDTC, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAD INSTALLED MOUL KHLING IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS APPOINTMENT WAS ANNOUNCED IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE HIS SENSE OF DISCIPLINE TO THE MARSHAL.

4. MEY SICHAN'S TRANSFER TO KOMPOT IS A DEMOTION FOR A GENERALLY CAPABLE OFFICER. BG UNH NHACH DESERVED TO LOSE THE KOMPOT COMMAND IN THAT HE HAS SHOWN BOTH POLITICAL AND MILITARY INEPTITUDE DURING THE PAST MONTHS. WE WOULD NOT EXPECT HIM TO DO BETTER, HOWEVER, AT HIS NEW SUBDISTRICT OF KOMPONG SPEU, WHICH EQUALS IN IMPORTANCE HIS LAST COMMAND.

5. BG ROSE PROEUNG'S APPOINTMENT AS ROUTE 4 SPECIAL ZONE COMMANDER MUST DEFINITELY BE PLACED ON THE MINUS SIDE OF THE LEDGER. WE WOULD RATE HIS BRIGADE AMONG THE WORST IN FANK.

6. BG KEM THI SEEMS TO BE AN ABLE OFFICER WHO PERHAPS DID NOT SATISFY THE MARSHAL'S DESIRE TO EXPAND THE GEN TRADE IN PAILIN. HE SHOULD BE AN IMPROVEMENT OVER BU TITH IN PURSAT. HIS SUCCESSOR IN PAILIN, COLONEL DIEP SIEN, IS NOW WELL KNOWN TO US.

7. THE OTHER CHANGES ANNOUNCED APPEAR TO HAVE RELATIVELY LITTLE IMPORTANCE.
SWANK

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